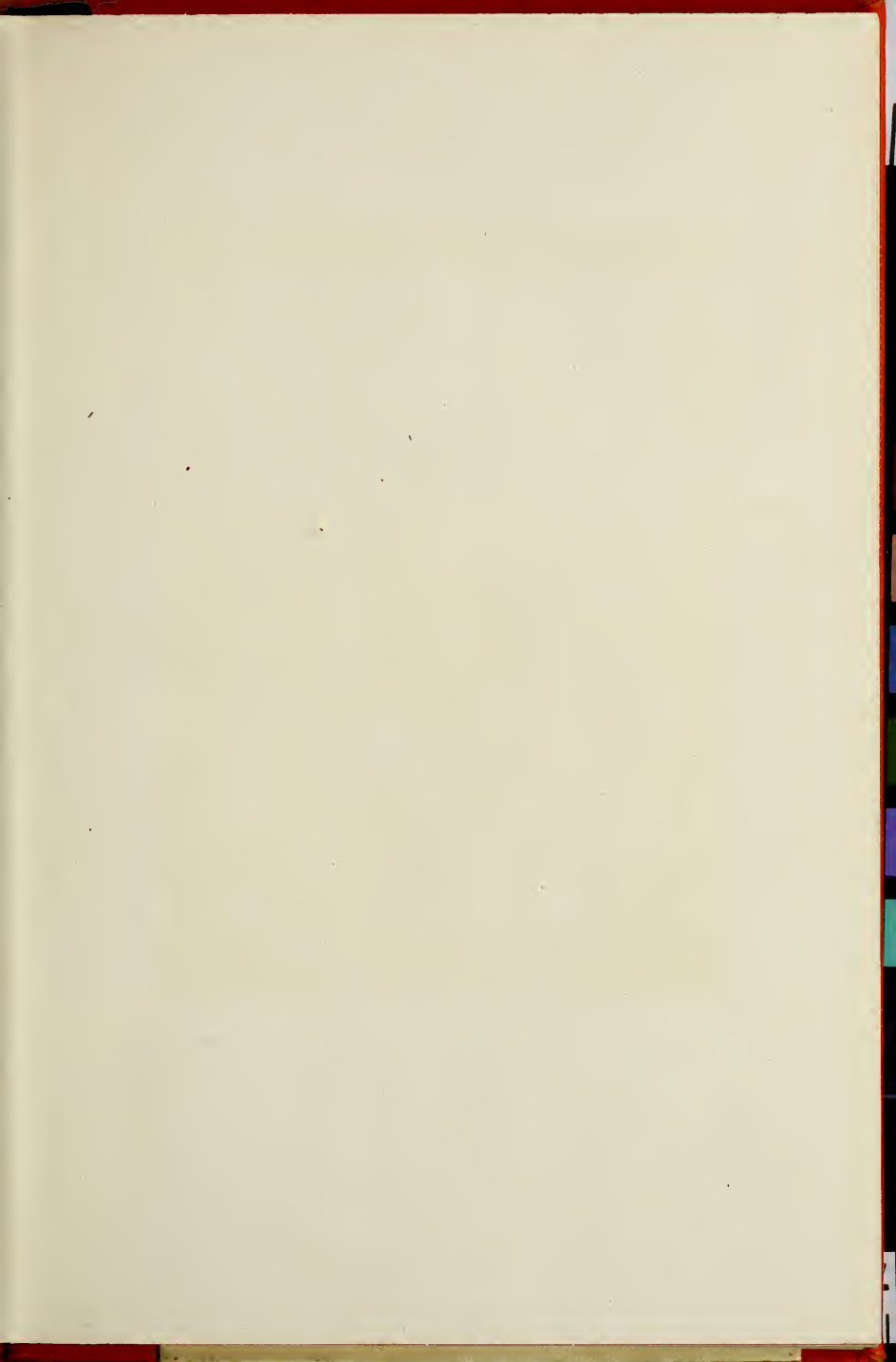


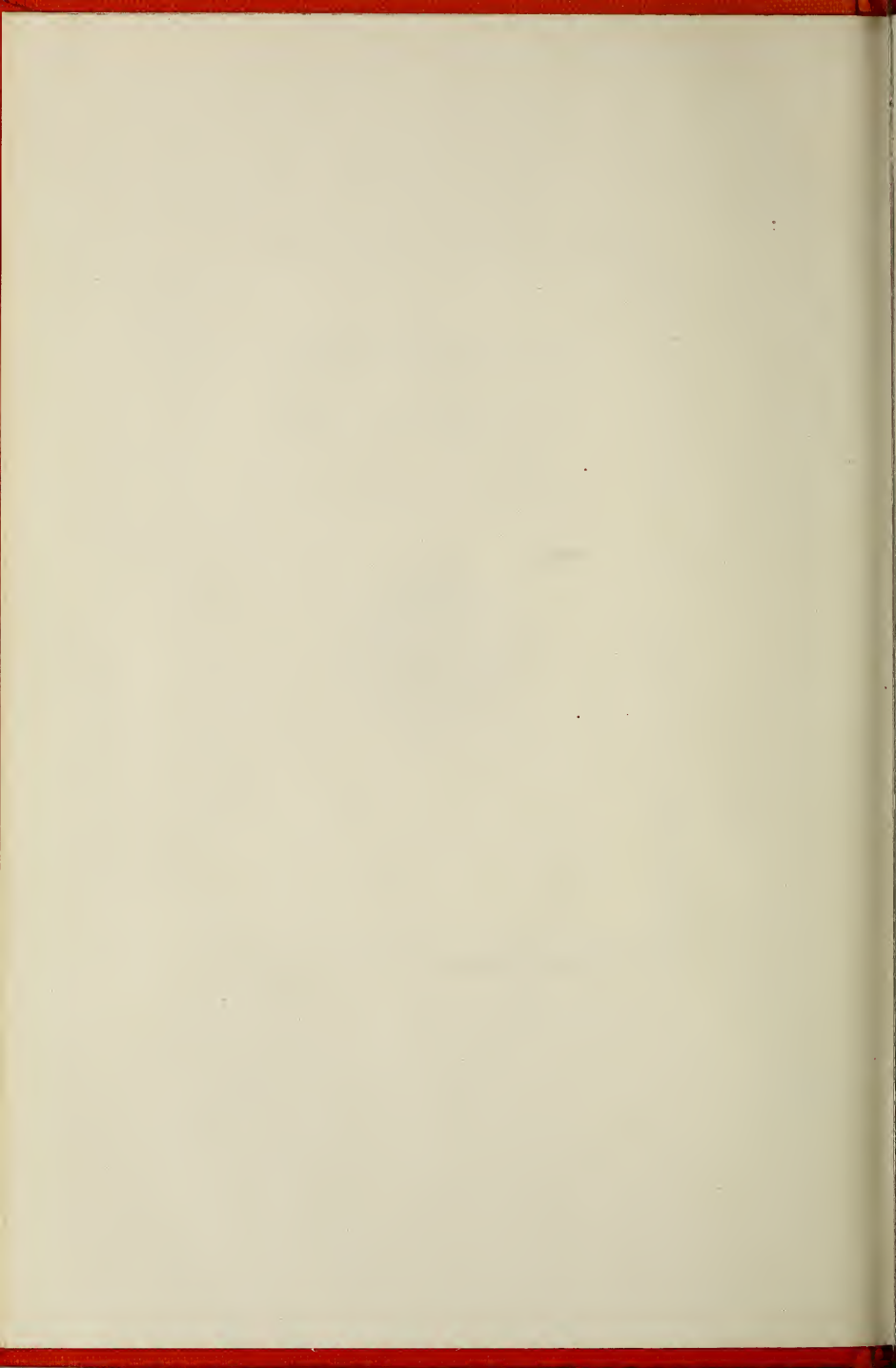
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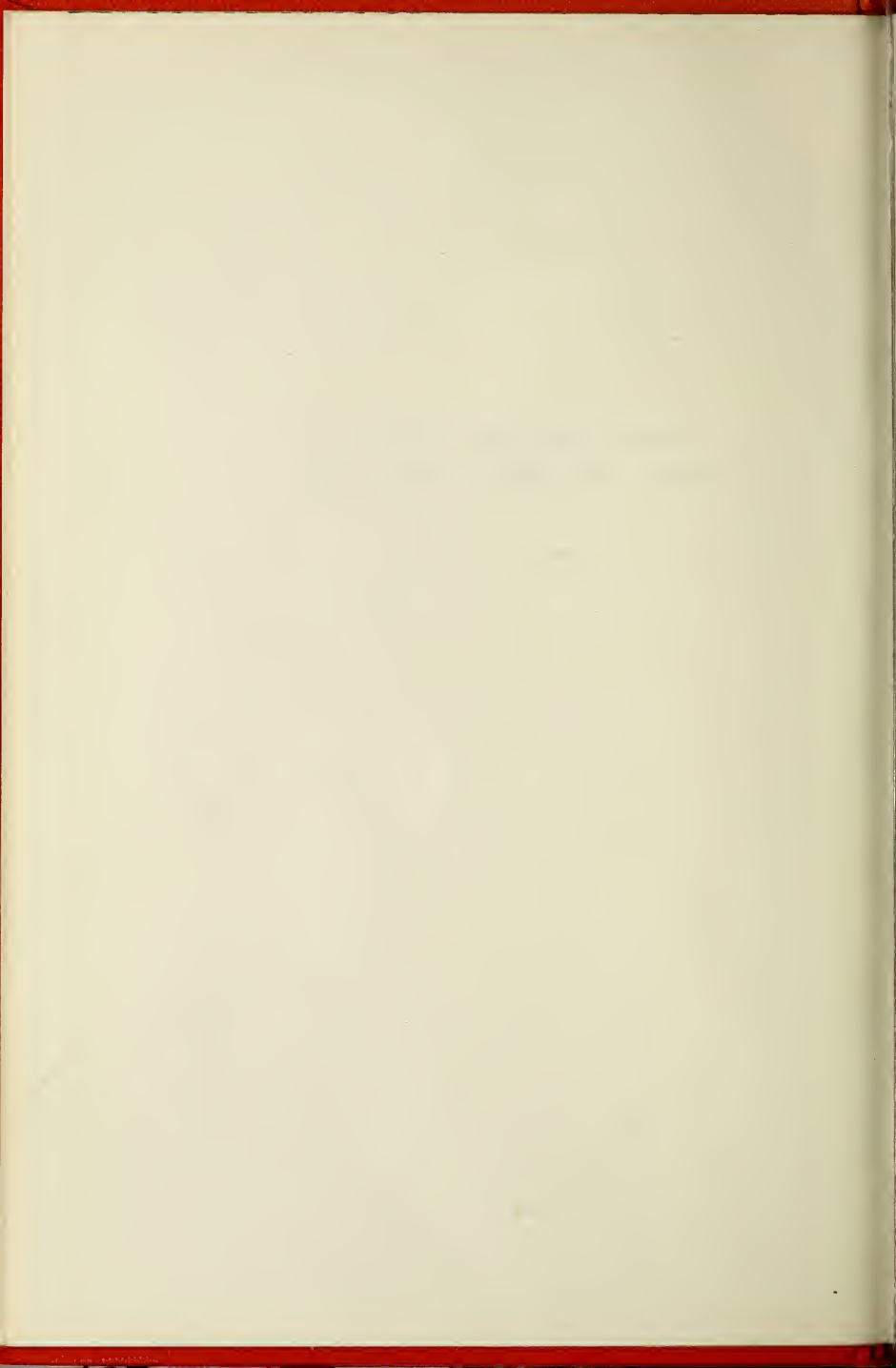
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HELLENISM AND
THE MODERN WORLD



HELLENISM
AND THE
MODERN WORLD

BY
GILBERT MURRAY

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PREFACE

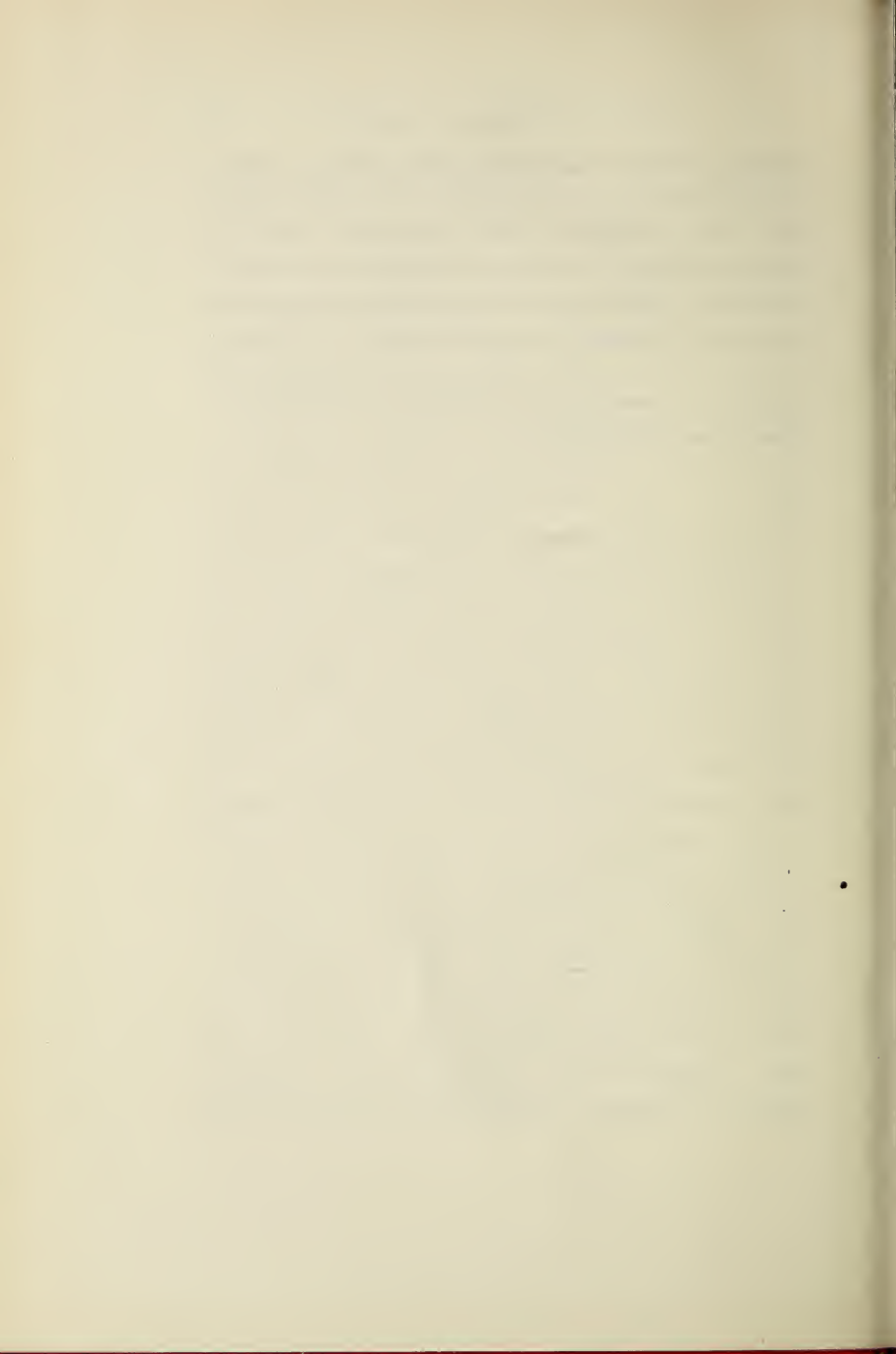
THESE TALKS were given first on the Radio-diffusion Française in 1952 and repeated, with some revision, on the BBC Home Service in April-May 1953. In the meantime, however, I had listened to those fascinating Reith Lectures on "The World and the West" with which Arnold Toynbee shook us all from our dogmatic slumbers. I thought at first that I should have to make some changes, or at least some withdrawals of rash statements, in my script. But it was not necessary. Even in that small part of his vast canvas where we were dealing with the same subject our focus of interest was different. I was trying to trace the special development of that 'Christian' or 'Hellenic' civilization to which we peoples of Europe and the English-speaking world historically belong, and to consider how, amid multifarious 'barbarian' influences it may still preserve or even raise its traditional standards, and continue to set to the whole world an example of what is meant by civilization. Mr. Toynbee carefully abstained from any such self-admiring prejudice, observing that naturally every nation thought its own ways the best, and merely noting objectively the 'aggressions' and 'reactions' between them. One lesson at least which

we of the West may learn from Mr. Toynbee's book will be to take great care, when we are bringing help to some 'barbarian' or 'less advanced' nation in need, that what we think of as generous help may not seem to the recipient more like contemptuous almsgiving or even arrogant interference.

I hope I am not blind to the defects of our western civilization or oblivious of the terrible wrongs done throughout history by the dominant races of mankind to those who stood in their way. Yet I feel strongly that the Western Community, with all its faults and vulgarities, and with all that it still has to learn from certain Eastern nations, is nevertheless, in virtue of its Hellenic and Christian heritage, called upon to lead the world. "The present is hard and the future veiled"; and we have a very great civilization to lose or save. It is not an effete or corrupt generation that responded with such instant enthusiasm to the vow of dedication and service undertaken by our young queen; not a cynical world which, after the disastrous failure of its hopes in the League of Nations, has so almost unanimously pledged itself again to follow the same practical ideal; not a hardened or unrepentant community which is pouring out such a vast flood of charity and remedial measures from every possible source, personal, social, religious and governmental, in its longing to redeem the wrongs

of the Second World War. The silent undercurrents of human feeling are, I believe, far nobler and in the long run more important than the much publicized conflicts of national or sectional ambition. Of course all is in danger. But I see no reason to doubt that our Christian or Hellenic civilization is on the right road; certainly no reason to lower our traditional standards or abate our old courage.

G. M.



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I

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION: ROME, JERUSALEM, ATHENS

EVERY CIVILIZATION has its roots in the past, and Europe has a great civilization of which we Europeans are all extremely conscious, though we hardly know what name to give it. We sometimes say 'Christian', sometimes 'Hellenic'. Of course, historically, we all have millions of ancestors: Europe is the product of multitudes of different nations and histories; yet it is surprising how little permanent effect most of them have had. Allowing for a vigorous influence from the North and a little, mostly unconscious, from the East, our vital inheritance seems really to come from three particular cities: Athens, Jerusalem and Rome.

The Roman influence is everywhere. It is by far the most visible and striking; but in almost every case, when we look beneath the surface, the real moving power is Greek. Our Latin alphabet is really Greek, our Roman Law Greek in origin, our political ideas almost entirely Greek. We even describe the tradition

as 'Hellenic' because, as the Roman poet says, "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*": "captured Greece made her rude conqueror captive". Greek culture was moving on much the same lines as Rome, but happened to be more advanced; also, Greece had from the most primitive times an extraordinary command of language: at a stage when other peoples could scarcely mumble, the Greeks were clearly articulate. They could think clearly; they could explain and teach.

In the ordinary regions of scientific knowledge Rome had simply to follow the lead of Greece. She had to learn from Greece her architecture, her field measurements, her seamanship and navigation, her medicine, her geography, geometry, astronomy and mathematics in general. We do not notice our dependence on Greece and Rome in such things, because discoveries in science, however glorious to the discoverer and important to society, are quickly surpassed by further discoveries and made obsolete. But in the region of things that are not ever surpassed, the regions of imagination and aspiration, Greece had the same unquestioned lead. A Roman with a love of poetry in the first or second century B.C. found abundance of magnificent Greek poetry to read, and very little in his own language or elsewhere. When Virgil's genius sought expression,

it found it in the sort of pastorals that Theocritus wrote, in the poems about fields and crops and bees that Hesiod and Arâtus wrote, or in some part of the great heroic or romantic tradition expressed by so many Greek poets from Homer to Apollonius. Horace, a great original poet himself, can give no more emphatic advice to a young poet than to turn over his Greek models night and day. When Lucretius wanted to find the true secret of the universe, he could only go to a Greek philosopher for it; when he wanted the proper technique for expressing it in such a way as to move mankind, he went to Greek poets. The philosophy which moved the Romans most was, characteristically, that which was concerned with practice and told men and statesmen what to do. It was ethics, politics and, to some extent, religion. That sort of thing was only to be found in Greek writers. The Latin language had not even the necessary vocabulary, until great masters of language like Cicero invented the suitable words and could proceed to translate and explain. It is interesting to notice that Cicero, the first Roman philosopher, translates from the Greek, but in less than two centuries later the chief Roman philosopher of that time, Marcus Aurelius, actually writes in Greek. Roman civilization, as it became more perfect, became more Hellenic,

and as it decayed tried to grasp tightly the bits of Hellenism that it could still hold.

The Romans were wonderful governors, probably the best there had ever been. They had courage, conscience and a sense of justice; but otherwise they were rough, practical men. If we look for the specific heritage which the Roman example has left for modern civilization to maintain or to recover, we shall find, I think, two great institutions: a united religion and a united civilization. In saying united, I mean world-wide or 'œcumenical' in the limited, ancient sense—that is, covering what they called the *oecúmenê*, the 'inhabited' or civilized world as known to the Romans. The united civilization was attained by deliberate effort, by military conquest and effective government. It lasted with varying degrees of success for some centuries. It is above all things what we are now striving to recover. The united religion came about almost unconsciously, and indeed reluctantly, in response to the primordial cravings of human society, and has lasted on in great strength to the present day.

To discuss the effort for political unity would take us too far afield; but the movement towards unity in religion is instructive to trace, and perhaps suggests to us a great problem for our own future.

Ancient religions were never intolerant, but were always extremely local. You had your own gods and could fairly neglect other people's gods—unless indeed you happened to be in their territory, when of course you must show them proper respect. Man's whole life in an agricultural age depended on the annual food-supply; so the local gods were mostly agricultural. Each little settlement had its divine protectors; almost always a local Earth-Mother and a divine Son or Young King, who brought the new vegetation and went through the whole annual process of birth, death and resurrection. There was of course also a great Father, to rule and protect and do justice, but he was farther off in the sky. The Son was nearer; he came from the union of Sky and Earth, the son of a god and a mortal woman.

As the rule of Rome spread and became a unity, her old local cults could not be expected to serve the needs of nations far off who had never seen Rome. A religion was needed for the whole Roman Empire; and Roman statesmen, though not as a rule much interested in religious speculations, had to attend to it. The subject peoples might of course go on worshipping their own gods as much as they liked, but they must somehow give honour and worship to the gods of Rome. Experiments

were tried with *Dea Roma*, the Goddess Rome; but it did not act very well. It was somehow too artificial for a real religion. Then, on the analogy of oriental kings, the Emperor himself was deified. He did not insist on being actually worshipped, and some Emperors ventured to make jokes about their supposed deification. It was enough if his special authority was recognized; enough if people would, as a sign of loyalty, burn a little incense to him. If any nation refused that, it was suspicious; it must mean that they had some sinister religion of their own, with gods who hated Rome, or perhaps hated all mankind except their chosen people. All normal Roman citizens wanted some common worship. Historians have noticed as one of the weaknesses of the Graeco-Roman world that the only sphere in which they showed much original thought was that where philosophy merges into religion. Could not the philosophers devise a suitable world religion? They tried and tried, but their systems were too highly intellectual, too much based on reason. How could the mass of men understand them? And a world religion must be based on man's instinctive wants and fears, not on his arguments. The old City-state had by now become obsolete as an independent unit of government, so the old City-state cults had become obsolete also.

The way was open for some common religion which would unite all the *oecûmenê*, all the inhabited world. It could not of course be something entirely new. It must be based on something already existing in the Mediterranean peoples. It must somehow satisfy the old primordial desire of the human heart for something human or friendly behind the mass of dead phenomena—for a Father to protect and to do justice, for a Mother who could love and pity her children; and in all agricultural peoples for a spring vegetation god, a saviour born of Sky and Earth. At one time it looked as if the Persian-Babylonian cult of Mithras, the faithful Saviour who gave his life in sacrifice for his people, might become the religion of the Empire. It was strong in the imperial armies and was ready to make a mystical identification of the reigning Emperor with the *Sol Invictus Mithras*. But something shook its prestige: perhaps its failure to resist the attacks of the northern barbarians; perhaps its lack of emotional appeal compared with the Isis-Osiris cult of Egypt, or the cults of those Anatolian communities which put first a Divine Mother, with her son and her consort less emphasized. But the ultimate success, permanent and undoubted, fell to the combination of Jewish and Greek worship called Christianity.

The two had influenced one another for a long time. The Old Testament was Hebrew, but parts of it showed Greek influence; the Apocrypha was mostly Greek or mostly extant in Greek; the New Testament was all in Greek, with such Aramaic sources as there may have been soon forgotten or obliterated. Coming from the Jews and the subject peoples of the eastern provinces, it became in part a cry of human suffering, a religion of the poor and oppressed. A wonderful blend it was; and we have, of course, a wonderful account of its making. Paul, the Hellenistic Jew, who must have been quite familiar with the idea of a World-Saviour, rather than a Jewish Messiah, seemed suddenly, after long meditation in the wilderness, to see that the World-Saviour had actually been born of woman and lived and known sacrifice and resurrection, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. St. Paul was a Jew as well as a Greek-speaking Roman citizen. One can see how his old Hebrew wine-flasks are almost bursting with the new wine of his Greek mysticism. But the religious cravings of the world to which he preached not only accepted him, but soon went far beyond him. They craved for a divine Mother as well as a Father; they had always had her and could not give her up: indeed, without her, how could they have

their divine Saviour Son? The Jews in Jerusalem, so proud of their pure monotheism, might violently reject the transformation; but the Hellenistic world was crying out for it, or something like it.

The quest for this universal religion produced a phenomenon previously unknown, or almost unknown, in antiquity: religious strife and persecution. As long as every locality or sect was free to have its own religion there was no particular reason to fight; but as soon as a universal claim was made there was a clash between the claimants. Chapels of Mithras have been unearthed full of corpses apparently burned to death by a rival sect. Besides, the universal claim naturally provoked resistance; and resistance gave rise to suspicion. Why was it that Jews or Christians refused to worship the gods? Because they were atheists? or because the Jews, as their Bible confessed, 'abhorred' all gentile gods and all gentiles? Only after long and fierce conflicts did the Graeco-Roman world at last find what it sought in an œcumenical Church, which survived the wrecks of empires and combined the aspirations of Hebrew and Hellene. Thus Rome gave us the framework, as Athens and Jerusalem on the whole gave the inner content of our living Christian civilization.

II

HISTORICAL HELLENISM THE REAL GREECE

WHAT WAS IT really like, this Hellenic civilization that had such a penetrating effect, that made Rome turn Hellenic, made Hebrew religion turn Hellenic, and has left the word 'Hellenism' as a sort of ideal heritage to many nations? Like all ideals, that ideal 'Hellenism' is of course a good deal different from the reality on which it is based. Our own modern civilization, a true child of Hellenism, at first sight seems extremely unlike that of ancient Greece. Any ancient Greek would feel far more at home in an untouched Polynesian island than in London or New York. Ours is an age of highly organized material civilization, accustomed to complete security in daily life, an age of complex machinery and mass production and of enormous governmental strength. The civilization of Greece, even of the Athenians at their most prosperous period, was startlingly unlike this. The arm of their government was neither long nor strong; within a day's walk from the Athens of Pericles

and Socrates you would find ignorant and primitive peasants, sometimes practising barbarous rites. Only recently, says Thucydides, had ordinary citizens felt secure enough to go about unarmed. Greek clothes, however gracefully worn, were little more than a sleeveless shirt and a blanket. They mostly went barefoot—at any rate they called the Lydians ‘soft-footed’ because they habitually wore shoes. They had no great roads, such as the Persians had; no drainage system like that of the Romans; no palaces to compare with the oriental palaces. No Greek community was ever comparable in size, wealth, population and the like to the great river civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The greatness of Greece depended on quite other qualities.

Compared with those oriental empires, a central fact which strikes us is that in Greece there was no divine or semi-divine Great King in the Babylonian or Egyptian sense. For one thing, Greek states were all on a small scale and all more or less equal. They could, and did, fight each other freely, but none had any thought of establishing a vast empire over all the rest. For another thing, Greek potentates are always sharply warned that, however successful they may be, they are only erring mortals and must not think they are gods. They must

not put up megalomaniac records of their own glory; not expect people to kiss the earth on entering their presence or to walk backwards on leaving it; not expect to have concubines and attendants sacrificed on their tombs; not put people to death without trial; not kill them by torture; not seize other men's wives and daughters. That sort of thing is all 'barbaric', not Hellenic. The treatment of war memorials is particularly interesting. The Egyptians and Assyrians put up gigantic limestone reliefs, showing the king in superhuman size receiving tribute from his enemies. The Assyrians showed him making pyramids of their skulls, or leading their kings into captivity by fish-hooks stuck through their noses. That was the proper barbarian way for a Great King to show his greatness. Even the Romans long afterwards had their rather revolting triumphs: the conqueror driving in his chariot with the spoils, with chained prisoners dragged behind him, their leaders to be executed after the show. The Greek rule was utterly different. There must be no *Hubris*: no triumph, no boasting, no maltreatment of the enemy dead, no killing of the prisoners of war. Furthermore, the Greek conqueror must put up no permanent war memorial; only what they called a 'trophy', that is, a wooden pole and crossbar with armour

upon it, to mark the site of the victory; a monument which by a rule of honour the conqueror must never repair and the conquered never pull down. Both must allow it gradually to break up and sink into the earth as the memory of the old evils faded. Man must remember his insecurity and beware of the fatal delusions of *Hubris*.

On the whole, in most ancient communities, the duty of man was pretty clearly prescribed by long-established tradition. It consisted of obedience to a great king, or to a god in the image of a great king, and the observance of a great number of traditional *taboos*. Think of the Book of Leviticus, with its elaborate list of *taboos* and rules of behaviour, the insistence on circumcision and the 'abhorring' of those tribes which did not practise it; think, even, of the detailed rules in Hammurabi's great code. In Greece we meet here and there fragmentary relics of such *taboos*: sects which abstain from beans or from animal flesh, or families which practise some special form of worship. But they seem to be merely relics of systems that have long passed away, of tribes and ancestral communities that have been broken up. In private life, indeed, a man's duty might be summed up in three commands: to obey the gods, to honour his parents, and to do

no injustice to strangers. But in public political life there was no traditional head of the family, or tribal chief taking his place; a man's duty was not to his ancestral or tribal chief, but to the *Polis* and its Laws; and even those Laws were recognized as man-made, to be criticized if they were not Just.

Early Greek origins are obscure; but the evidence seems to point to a period of great invasions, involving a break-up of settled society, in which populations fled here and there for refuge, tribes were scattered, the sacred graves of ancestors left behind, and old customs and conventions lost. There was danger all round; the only safety was within some *Polis*, some City or circuit Wall. Each group of refugees built its own *Polis* and became an organized body behind it—not of kinsmen, but of *Politai*—‘citizens’. There remained of their old life almost nothing, except what each man could carry with him, such things as he knew or remembered—what was called his *Sophia*, his Wisdom; and such personal qualities or abilities as made him definitely good for something—his virtue or *Aretê*. The people who had taken refuge inside the *Polis* were mostly, as Strabo says, “a mixed multitude”, not uniform in their traditions or customs. So they had to form new laws by agreement, often, no doubt,

with a certain amount of compromise. That laid a heavy responsibility on the men themselves, the responsibility of Freedom. They had no longer an unquestioned tradition to control or guide them: they must fall back on what stores they had of active *Sophia* and *Areté*; they must control themselves, think for themselves. They must remember not merely to be obedient to custom, which is easy, but to be really Just, which needs thought; to observe *Metron*, or Measure; to remember the rule of *Méden Agan*: Nothing Too Much; and to avoid above all things *Hubris*, Insolence or Excess, the deadly error to which all life is subject and which leads always to a fall.

The *Polis*, or small independent City-state, seems thus to have been responsible for some of the main characteristic aims of Greek civilization: the maintenance of Freedom, and the eager pursuit of *Areté* and *Sophia*—words which we conventionally translate by Goodness and Wisdom. But it is a Goodness which covers the qualities of a good man, a good bootmaker, a good horse or a good chisel. It is a Wisdom which ranges from craftsmanship and knowledge of mathematics to enlightened ideas and inspiration in poetry. Their craftsmanship was indeed wonderful; few ages could at all equal the actual mechanical stone-craft of the Parthenon;

but of course in science and technology their work, good as it was, has been utterly outstripped and reduced to nothing by modern discoveries. Only in philosophy, that is, the search for Truth in the great problems that still haunt mankind, and in art and poetry, that is, the impassioned vision and creation of what we vaguely call Beauty, we still, after two thousand years, are learning from them. Hellenism, more than any other civilization that we know, concentrated upon these things.

III

THE LOGOS

THE GREEKS were mocked at in antiquity for being so fond of talking. It was really their great glory. They believed in the power of the *Logos*. It was their way to settle disputes, their instrument for finding out what was true or what was fair. No other people at such an early stage of development had such a power of expressing itself. Those that had uniform tribal rules and customs did not often need to have disputes at all; if they had, the dispute became a fight. But when a 'mixed multitude' was settled as citizens in a new-built City Wall they had to come to agreement about their needs and laws and practices. They had to persuade each other; and the great instrument of persuasion, the great substitute for violence, is the *Logos*. Traditionally it is translated 'word'; but it is 'talk' or 'speech': *sermo* rather than *verbum*. It is the most characteristic word in the Greek language. I see that the New Greek Dictionary, severely compressed as it is, takes 5,500 words to explain the meaning

of *Logos*. It lies at the root of philosophy, science, religion. Everything in the world has a *Logos*, it says something, means something; God himself is saying something. If we listen carefully we can understand. Also, we must preserve what wise people in the past have said, their *Logoi*. But let us consider what kind of *Logoi* the Greeks preserved, as compared with other ancient nations. The Hebrews, for instance, have left a splendid literature, but rather narrow in range. There is an account of the beginning of the world, as in Babylonian and Egyptian; there are collections of laws and taboos; there are valuable books of history, the text carefully edited again and again by the orthodox priests of Yahweh; there is a collection of songs or psalms, all religious and all in much the same style. There is also a body of literature not extant anywhere else: a collection of the oracles of the prophets—that is, of course, the prophets of Yahweh. For some reason prophecy reached a higher level of thought and expression among the Hebrews than in any other society known to us.

What of Babylon and Egypt? Babylonian literature differs from Hebrew, of course, in having the characteristics of a great imperial state. It is polytheistic. We happen to possess the remains of the library of Assurbanipal,

the last great king of Assyria; a far greater library than anything classical Greece could pretend to. But what are its contents? There is Hammurabi's great code of law; there is the cosmological epic and the epic of Gilgamesh and a few similar poems; but in the main, a quantity of prescribed rituals, different for different gods and for different priests, and adding up to a vast mass; a record of the great deeds of the king; and then a collection of thousands of signs and omens. It is all dominated by religion, law, magic and astrology. Egyptian literature, though it has some good stories and hymns, is equally dominated by magico-religious texts. The Book of the Dead, for instance, has been found in more than a thousand tombs.

When we turn to Greek Literature we are in a totally different atmosphere. The first thing is the extraordinary variety and ease of expression. Where Hebrew presented us with one form of poetry—or at most two, the psalms and the prophecies—Greek gives us the epic and the mock epic, the philosophical poem, the choral lyric and the personal lyric, each class with many subdivisions; quantities of political poems, from the reforming Solon to the disgruntled Theognis and the revolutionary Alcaeus; wonderful drama, both tragic and comic; love-song, elegy and narrative. Both

Hebrew and Greek maintain a firm distinction between the half-magical language of poetry and the prose of ordinary life, but where in Hebrew there is only one fixed form of poetic language, in Greek every kind of poetry is apt to have its appropriate metre and dialect.

In prose, of course, the variety is even greater, though, curiously enough, the kind of prose that is commonest in Babylon and Egypt is absent. There are in classical times no magic texts, no books of oracles, no records of royal megalomania. Oracles are sometimes quoted, and of course magic charms must have existed, but they were not apparently considered worth preserving. There is no one impressive code of law like that of Hammurabi; but a great number of local codes, mostly the work of individual law-givers, or the result of active thought and discussion. There is history of many types, from the mere chronicle to the all-embracing *Historiê*, or 'Enquiry', of Herodotus and the masterly political history of Thucydides. Then come two forms of literature almost unknown elsewhere: philosophy and oratory. Philosophy in the most various forms, as it is based on physical science, or the needs of society, or the aspirations of ethical thought. Oratory—that is, businesslike argumentative discussion—was a natural growth from free political institu-

tions. There was no place for it in the oriental monarchies; one can hardly imagine a discussion on foreign policy between the adherents of Jehu and those of Jezebel, or between Nehemiah and Sanballat the Horonite on the wisdom of rebuilding Jerusalem; but Thucydides is full of such debates, and, what is unparalleled in ancient, and rare in modern, literature, both sides seem to be understood and fairly stated. Then there is the mass of occasional writings, like the Old Oligarch's criticism of the Athenian democracy, Xenophon's reminiscences, Sophron's mimes or imaginary conversations, and the mime's marvellous progeny, the Platonic dialogue. The variety is much greater than in any literature before or since, until we come to quite modern times. Neither Rome nor the Middle Ages come near to it.

It is modern in another sense too, in the very small part played by magic or superstition. There must have been plenty of superstition among the masses in Greece, and even in Athens: that can be proved from history and is illustrated by Theophrastus' amusing study of *The Superstitious Man*. But it was evidently looked down upon: it was not allowed to dominate serious literature. There is only one firmly rooted belief of a supernatural kind, and that one which it would be harsh to call superstition.

In poetry, history and philosophy alike, there is an undercurrent of conviction that the whole order of nature is somehow a moral order. The moral law is a real fact and transgression is, by a Law of Nature, followed by punishment. No one can be unjust with impunity: as the proverb says, "there are avengers for an injured dog". Apart from this unproven faith, philosophy in general emancipates itself from traditional bonds with a completeness which has no parallel before, say, the seventeenth century in France or the eighteenth in England. As for science, the so-called Oath of Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, shows an attitude which would put to shame many practitioners for some thousand years after. The doctor must swear "to make no pretence of magic, never to take advantage of a patient's sufferings or fears, but to remember always that he enters a sick man's house as a friend to all who dwell there".

I will not discuss the degree to which educated Athenians in the fifth century believed in their gods. It would be a foolish question, because Greek religion did not operate with creeds, only with practices. But one might say they believed very little in the Homeric literary gods, but a great deal in the strictly local deities who make little show in literature but have their roots firmly in the earth. But it seems certain that one

of the first characteristics of Greek civilization was scepticism. There were too many *Logoi*: too many local legends and traditions preserved; they contradicted each other, so one could not believe them all. There was no authoritative orthodoxy, and seldom any censorship of a religious kind. We find from the very outset divergent historical traditions. Remains of local heroic legend are often contrary to the Iliad and Odyssey; Herodotus makes a point of collecting and criticizing divergent versions of the stories that he records. The first of historians, Hecataeus, starts his book with the remarkable outburst: "I write as seems to me true, for the traditions (*Logoi*) of the Greeks are divergent and absurd". In philosophy, Protagoras says boldly: "About the gods I cannot say either that they are or that they are not, or what like they are". As for Heraclitus of Ephesus, there is nothing to prevent him from saying roundly that "much learning does not teach sense, else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras", and adding that Homer and Archilochus ought to be "whipped off the course" for their misconduct. Imagine Jeremiah, or even Habakkuk, who is *capable de tout*, saying such things about Moses! More remarkable still, perhaps, is Xenophanes, a professional rhapsode who lived by reciting Homer: he

condemns Homer and Hesiod not only for "attributing to the gods actions which are disgraceful to men"; but because their anthropomorphic gods are ridiculous—"If cows or lions had gods, no doubt their gods would have the form of cows and lions. In truth god is a spirit with no shape of that sort".

The word 'modern' is not always a term of praise; but, in perhaps the best sense of the word, how extraordinarily modern this is! Especially remarkable is the freedom with which the language itself moves. Most ancient languages are stiff; they express themselves in fixed formulae; there are things they can express and things which they cannot express. It would be almost impossible to discuss a modern political or philosophical problem in classical Hebrew, difficult even in Latin. But in Greek it can always be done, unless indeed you want to talk of things which had not been invented in Greek times, and for which, as it happens, we generally have to invent a Greek name—like 'telephone' or 'cinema'. A recent Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in Oxford, when wishing to get some thought exactly expressed, used sometimes to write it in Greek as being clearer than either German or English.

Equally remarkable and almost equally modern was the actual freedom of speech, both political

and religious. The three or four condemnations for 'impiety' like that of Socrates, which occurred in the course of a terrible and prolonged war, became famous scandals. Considering how democratic Athenian courts were, and how superstitious any Demos is when really frightened, it is a surprisingly small list. The writers quoted above do not seem to have suffered for their philosophical scepticism; Aristophanes does not seem to have lost popularity for his attacks on the war party in the midst of the war.

It does seem to have been widely recognized that, in order to reach truth or to reach justice, every thinker had to "listen to the other side". It is characteristic that Plato never dogmatizes but always approaches truth by a dialogue, an argument between different points of view, and almost always leaves at the end some doubt, some feeling that though we have got deeper we have not quite reached the complete truth. Here, too, we find the influence of the *Polis*. It was built, Aristotle says, that men might live, that they might escape from enemies and pursuers; but it goes on in order that men may "live well" and find what is really the good life. And the way to that is by the *Logos*, by thinking and discussing.

IV

A 'LIBERAL' CIVILIZATION WRECKED BY WAR

I SAW some time ago a letter from a woman, a cultivated and liberal-minded woman, who had been some years in prison, first Nazi and then Communist, where she was kept without books, till at last by some special grace a friend was allowed to send her some. Among the books was a Thucydides. She read the Funeral Speech of Pericles about Athens and almost wept: that was the sort of city which recalled the ideals of her youth, not like any city remaining in Europe as it now is. Of course, the Funeral Speech is not meant to be a perfectly objective or matter-of-fact account; it is an old man's picture of the days of his youth. It was written by Thucydides after the fall of Athens, to try to show people what the Beloved City really had been in the time of her greatness under her greatest leader. There may well be some idealization, but what is instructive to us is the sort of ideal that Athens pursued, not the question whether she reached it or not.

It is not at all the ideal that would suit present-day Berlin or Moscow; nor yet ancient Sparta, nor Rome, nor Babylon nor Jerusalem. It is modern and—in the strict sense of the word—Liberal, *Liberalis*, or in Greek ἐλευθέριος “fit for a Free Man”, without fear or hatred or inward slavery.

Pericles begins by explaining that Athens is called a democracy, because the government is in the hands of the many, not of the few. The law secures equal justice for all; but that does not mean that men are all on a dead level. Some are better than others, and those who excel in any way are more esteemed and honoured. There are rewards and privileges for real merit, but not for mere rank or wealth. Poverty is never a bar: the poorest citizen has the right to take part in the Assembly and try to make his contribution to the guidance of his country. Again, life is free. No one in his private life is frowned at, or treated with intolerance if he chooses to live in a way different from the common. In public life, Athenians are restrained from doing wrong not by force or threats of force, but by a general spirit of respect for the laws, especially those laws that bring protection to the injured or helpless, and the unwritten laws of decency and honour which are felt by good men but not enforced

by any statute. "We Athenians have happy lives", says Pericles. "All the riches of the earth flow into Athens through our widespread commerce. We provide leisure, not mere idleness, for the overtired." The whole style of Athenian life is refined, and a general interest in art and culture serves to drive dullness away. "Our military training may in various ways be better than that of our neighbours, but we never exclude foreigners or try to prevent their seeing or learning things that might be useful to them. Our City throws itself open to the world." (There was no 'iron curtain': no perpetual fear of neighbouring cities, no plotting against them.)

"The Athenians love beauty, but have not luxurious tastes; they cultivate the mind without any loss of manliness." As to wealth, of course it is useful for many good purposes; but it is not with us a thing to boast about or to display. No one in Athens need be ashamed of being poor, unless indeed his poverty is due to lack of industry and good work—then he well may be. Unlike other cities, Athens expects every citizen to take an interest in public affairs; and, as a matter of fact, most Athenians have some sense of public affairs. We believe in the value of knowledge as a guide to action: we have a power of thinking before we act and of acting too, whereas many peoples can be full of energy

if they do not think, but when they reflect begin to hesitate. We make friends abroad by doing good and giving help to our neighbours; and we do this not from some calculation of self-interest but in the confidence of freedom and in a frank and fearless spirit, "I would have you fix your eyes upon Athens day by day, contemplate her δύνανται—her potentiality; not merely what she is but what she has the power to be, until"—the phrase is even stronger in Greek than in English—"until you become her Lovers. Reflect that her glory has been built up by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it. Make them your examples and learn from them that the secret of Happiness is Freedom, and the secret of Freedom, Courage."

That, as Thucydides' memory paints the picture, is what Athens in her flower once was, Athens before the Great War or—as the last phrase seems to show—at the start of the Great War. It was a free and happy city, simple in daily life but rich in culture and thought, tolerant at home and open and unsuspecting in its dealings abroad. It sought foreign friendships by helping other cities in their times of need. No doubt the picture is idealized; but the striking point is the kind of ideal that is aimed at, an ideal not quite like that of any other civilization

between that time and our own nineteenth or twentieth century. It was a Liberal civilization: free, tolerant and unprejudiced; highly cultured; and out of its abundance generous and helpful to the rest of mankind.

But the Great War had begun, and Thucydides describes unsparingly its effects—in the hope, he says, that his account may possibly be of use to statesmen of later times, if by chance a situation of the same sort should ever occur again. War, he says, takes away that abundance and leaves no room for generosity. War is a violent schoolmaster: it educates men in doing violence to one another. The war of which he speaks was on a great scale. It lasted on, it became more bitter, and it spread farther and farther. It became what we now call ideological: a war of revolutionary against conservative or, more nakedly, of poor against rich, or merely of clique against clique, irrespective of right and wrong. There were 'fifth columns' all over Greece; there were civil wars, hidden or open, everywhere. After ten years there came not exactly peace, but at least a great frustrated effort at peace, frustrated by the various wrongs and grievances created by the war itself and clamouring for a second and worse war to set them right. War, all in all, for twenty-seven years, with civil wars in its train.

And what effect has it all on that high, free-minded, liberal civilization of Athens? Thucydides tells us. The whole Hellenic world, he tells us, was shaken, every part of it being divided between the partisans of one or other of the two great cities. "Civil war", he says, more pervasive of daily life and consequently more treacherous and cruel than other war—"led to every form of wickedness throughout Greece." At each new crisis men strove to outbid their opponents "by the ingenuity of their intrigues and the atrocity—the word is literally 'the unthinkable' or 'unguessable'—of their revenges". Revenge became dearer to men than self-preservation. All moral values were transformed. Violence, frantic energy, successful treachery, were the things applauded; prudence, moderation, good faith suspected and despised. Party feeling was stronger than any bond of family or affection. (Children, I suppose, betrayed or denounced their fathers.) "That simplicity which is so large an element in nobility of nature, was laughed out of existence." The root cause of it all was *Arché*, the wish for 'domination', the unlimited craving for Power. We hear perhaps of no atrocities in Athens itself, but there was a lowering of all standards. In home politics power fell into the hands of "the most violent of the citizens"; towards other

communities Athens too fell a victim to this lust for power, this *Arché*, which another Greek author describes as "the wicked harlot who makes city after city in love with her, to betray them one after another to their ruin" (Isocrates 8. 103). Thucydides expounds its principles in an imaginary dialogue between the corrupted Athenians of the later war time, and their victims in the neutral island of Melos. The Melians have committed no offence, but their island would be useful to Athens. The Melians appeal to law, to established custom, to justice, to man's regard for the gods; the Athenians explain frankly that such considerations are of no account to them; it is only Power that matters. They use their power, conquer Melos, kill the men, sell the women and children into slavery, and therewith—the historian grimly adds—they set off triumphant on the fatal expedition against Sicily which is to bring the reward of *Hubris* and leave imperial Athens in the dust.

The great liberal Hellenic civilization failed to get rid of war, and war was able to destroy it—by inward poison as well as by outward violence. Thucydides was perhaps not so far wrong when he thought that his history might be of some use to statesmen of later ages if the same sort of situation should ever occur again.

V

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR not only left Athens and her rivals in the dust, but led, as has often been observed, to a change in the direction of Greek thought. The fifth century had been the age of the Polis: a man's whole duty was towards his City; his pride and his hopes were centred in his City's greatness; the gods he worshipped were his City's gods; there was no greater glory than to die for his City. And now the City, with its claim for *Archê* over subjects and rivals and over the mind and conscience of its citizens, had calamitously failed. In the fourth and third centuries the interest of thought in Greece had turned from the service of the City to the good of Man and his soul.

The City died hard. It was the best form of society hitherto achieved. It did maintain a higher civilization than any mere collection of tribes or any slavish oriental empire. Demosthenes, with splendid eloquence and courage, tried hard to preserve Athens, with all her

faults, alive and free. Isocrates, perhaps the wisest publicist of the time, took the same view as Thucydides: it was not the City itself that was wrong; it was the pursuit of that wicked temptress *Archê*. Two of the great philosophers held the same faith. Plato, who had suffered bitterly through the whole age of baffled hope, proletarian violence and ultimate defeat, kept seeking always for some City that should be guided right, should seek not Power but Justice, and itself be Justice realized; perhaps the City of a great philosopher king; perhaps something more ordinary and prosaic, if only it could have good laws and avoid the errors of the mad Athenian demos. Aristotle more practically analyses the necessary problems of the state and, in order to have good material before him, actually makes a collection of over a hundred—perhaps over two hundred—different existing constitutions. But most of the great fourth-century schools—Stoics, Pythagoreans, Epicureans, Cynics, and devotees of the various Saviour-religions—have turned away from the consideration of worldly values and speak chiefly of the soul and its duties, virtue, wisdom and inward peace. And even Plato and Aristotle seldom or never condescend to touch contemporary politics.

As for *Archê*, that craving for power over

others, which in its simplest form is merely an instinct of life and growth but may pass so swiftly both in nations and leaders of nations into the most ruinous of passions, it was already condemned. It had been to Thucydides "the cause of all the evils". Besides, the City-state soon proved to be too small and weak a unit to think of Empire; her highest hope now—and that a precarious one—was to preserve her own freedom. For *Arché* there were now much larger units of power in strife with one another; not mere cities, but whole nations, or masses of barbaric tribes conquered and made more efficient by Alexander's generals. His successors found themselves in control of great semi-hellenized empires, in which there was a sharp difference between the Cities and the Hinterland. The Cities had been hellenized: there was Greek law; an accused person had free speech and a fair trial; he knew what the law was, and his punishment, if guilty, was of a civilized sort. The vast Asiatic hinterland had not yet been dealt with. There a king or a native satrap could condemn a man without trial; could invent his punishment; could, if he liked, condemn the offender's whole family with him. Outside the Cities, the Syrian empire was still a place where, as a Greek poet puts it, "heads are cut off, eyes gouged out, limbs

mutilated; where boys are castrated and the air is filled with the groaning of men impaled or crucified". Such an empire was still in the main barbaric, but under its Greek rulers it was eagerly trying to 'hellenize' itself and become Greek. Indeed, the whole Mediterranean world was trying. Intelligent or enterprising men set themselves to copy Greek ways, to learn the Greek language, to read Greek books, to listen to Greek teachers and try to understand the secret of Greek superiority.

These two or three centuries are known as the Hellenistic Age; but it would be a mistake to think of the process as a simple one, between Greeks on the one side and mere 'barbarians' on the other. There was a great meeting and mingling of different cultures and traditions: especially Hebrew, Syrian and Egyptian. But it was Hellenistic for two reasons. For practical purposes of business and diplomacy Greek had become the necessary language, while in the realms of the imagination and the intellect there hung about all that was Hellenic an almost uncontested aura of superiority. Men sought to become 'hellenized', partly for reasons of fashion or utility, but also because at a time when races, customs and religions were mingled and confused, Greek culture was not only held to be the noblest but was also the most tolerant

and the least oppressive to new-comers in its rules and customs. The Jews, for instance, were esteemed as "a philosophic race", with their monotheism and their wonderful Book telling in an orderly way how the world was really made, not all in confusion like Hesiod. But there were difficulties in Judaism; narrow compulsory laws and customs; a great deal of prejudice and the permanent doubt whether full membership was open to any but children of Abraham. The Egyptians, again, had masses of ancient wisdom. They had in Isis and Osiris a religion which summed up the vegetation worships that were practised everywhere. Then they had minor figures, like the divine baby Harpocrates, who attracted wide sympathy. But then, their worship of animals, their lack of any freedom or enlightenment! No, of the various possible cultures Hellenism was by far the most attractive.

But to ape Greek habits was not to become Hellenic. It was easy for a barbarian to use Greek weapons and inventions, to practise Greek methods of commerce, to throw off a number of foolish taboos and superstitions, and yet to remain in heart and conduct a barbarian. Nay, if it comes to that, it was not difficult for a Greek in a barbarian world to be barbarized without knowing it. Antiochus IV was determined to

win the loyalty of his Asiatic subjects by hellenizing them as fast as possible. That policy landed him in the hopeless barbarity of torturing and perhaps executing Jews, not for any unlawful act but in order to compel them to eat pork. A Hellene barbarized might be worse than any native barbarian, because the native, however foolish, would have some rules that he must not break; the Greek might well have come to the conclusion that all moral rules were superstitions. On the other hand, the mixture of Hellene and barbarian, at its best, might be something new and splendid. The Stoic school itself was founded by an Asiatic, Zeno, who had learnt and taught in Athens.

It was a strange confused age. Perhaps what strikes one most is man's lack of control over his environment. He wanted so much and achieved so little. The successors of Alexander had very large forces, but they could not keep the sea clear of pirates nor even the roads of robbers. The Greek cities were always making arbitration treaties and praying for *Homonoia*, Concord; but it always eluded them. They believed in Equality, but somehow fell into enormous inequalities of wealth. Slavery is a typical case. Philosophers were troubled in mind about the whole institution, but it was far too strong for them: it could not be changed without frightful

consequences. Neither Stoicism nor Christianity dared touch it. The New Testament says explicitly again and again: "Slaves, obey your masters"; and the philosophers, though they did not positively say the same, never said otherwise. Stoic, Pythagorean, Epicurean and the rest were content to treat slavery as a misfortune like any other; to make in their own minds no difference between slave and free, and to welcome into their spiritual communities on terms of equality all men, slave or free, male or female, who were seekers for the divine truth. There was an extraordinary output of idealist thought and ethics, Platonists, Stoics and followers of Epicurus all rejecting the values of the material world and concentrating upon higher things; an immense spread of the so-called Saviour-religions gathered round Osiris, Hermes the Mediator, Asclepius the Divine Healer, and others who professed somehow to deliver mankind from "the body of this death". It is noteworthy that in our very imperfect records we frequently find individuals manumitting their own slaves by twos and threes, while the big world markets went on enslaving others by thousands. We hear of rich men doing wonders of generosity to help communities in distress; of doctors in times of pestilence giving up all fees, working night and day, and being rewarded

at the end by a wreath of olive and an inscription which has happened to survive. We hear of great sacrifices made to ransom prisoners; and, in one case, of a man who gave himself up as a prisoner to pirates as a substitute for two captive women.

Hellenism in the true sense was open to all who "sought wisdom". For wisdom was a thing of the soul and open to every man. Part of the wisdom, no doubt, was in the Hellenic culture itself: to love and keep alive the works of the old Greek poets and artists, creators of beauty, and the understanding of the great philosophers, seekers for wisdom and virtue. And, perhaps most of all, to carry on that great continuing effort by which Hellas had sought, in the words of a Delphic inscription, "To tame the savageness of man" and "to make gentle the life of the world".

Did they utterly fail? Well, failure and success are relative terms and nothing human lasts for ever. Amid much obvious failure, in two important points the hopes of the Hellenistic Age were won. The leadership of the world fell not to any barbarous power, but to the most Hellenic of organized societies, to the city which had sat most devotedly at the feet of the great Greek writers and thinkers; which did produce once, in Marcus Aurelius, a great Philosopher King, and did achieve an epoch of world peace which

some historians have pronounced to be the happiest known period of human history. It is always worth remembering that Rome's Empire was not entirely won by force; that the Ptolemies, for instance, asked Rome to take over their dependency, Cyrene, for the good of the inhabitants; that Attalus of Pergamum thought he could best secure the freedom of his kingdom by making the Roman people his heir. And in the realm of the mind, it is a great thing that Rome did at least preserve a memory of something better than its own practice, an ideal Hellenism which can still in many ways be an inspiration to the world.

VI

HELLENE AND BARBARIAN

IN THIS whole story—the pride of the “Beloved City”; the pursuit of *Archê* by each City separately, ending in general war and the ruin of all the Hellenic world; the gradual self-conviction of the City itself as a unit too small and weak to stand alone; the attempt of a barbarian world somehow to attain Hellenic culture without submitting to Hellenic rule; the persistent effort to obtain *Homonoia*, Concord, between City and City, nation and nation; the attempt of philosophic Athens to save what she most valued by turning from the failure of the individual City to the saving of mankind and its soul—is it fanciful to see in all this a strange likeness to the history of our own age? Is it not merely to recognize a fact of history? The continent of Europe has been our modern Hellas; her separate nations have been the independent Cities, and their wars her ruin, as the wars of Athens and Sparta were the ruin of Hellas. And surely we may without self-flattery claim that in the high civilization which

Europe has inherited and passed on to her kindred across the oceans, is a Hellenism which the barbarian rejects but still longs to understand and assimilate.

For many centuries Europe was supreme among the organized societies of the world, with settlements all over the other continents in which the white man, as a matter of course, gave orders and the coloured natives obeyed. He governed not merely by military and economic power, but because on the whole he knew how to govern, and when he did wrong was promptly criticized by his own people. He had more resources, more knowledge, better justice, higher culture, and more humane ways of life; he did not habitually breed to the famine limit, and he had overwhelming prestige. Europe was the heir to a grand inheritance. From Jerusalem she had her monotheism and her Old Testament, from Rome her law and government, from Greece the love of freedom, knowledge, beauty and political justice, and, as a special bond among all her nations, a small Greek book proclaiming a religion of love and the supreme value of the soul. For a long time she seemed to be generally true to her inheritance, progressing steadily towards peace and co-operation and the arbitration of all national differences, till suddenly in the early days of this century

the movement forward seemed to be reversed. The actual increase of world unity, it would seem, resulted in bringing about world wars. The sovereign independent units in which the world was organized had been brought close together before they were ready for it: they hurt one another, their ambitions clashed, and the evil courtesan *Arché* proceeded to work her will. It was war and more war, until, to use Thucydides' words, "war gave rise to every form of wickedness" throughout Europe, and "each party tried to surpass his rival in the ingenuity of his plots and the atrocity—or 'unthinkableness'—of his revenges". Are the words not strangely apt?

The wars were chiefly in Europe, and as a result the former Queen of Continents is dethroned; no longer the strongest, no longer the wealthiest and most secure; no longer capable, after the unspeakable lies and cruelties of the Second World War, of claiming to be recognized as without question the most righteous or humane; her sovereign nations shown up as being no longer Great Powers but, just like the Greek Polis, units too small to think of aggressive *Arché* or even to stand securely on their own feet. Western Europe in general, I think, has learnt her lesson: she aims no longer at further *Arché*, she is content merely to hold her present position

and even, in some special cases, to retreat. Like Hellas, she is surrounded by much stronger units of power, a terribly powerful enemy to the east who rejects all her values, and an equally powerful child to the west who loves and defends them. Are we not indeed caught up in a great Hellenistic Age in which Europe, however weakened in force, still remains—with her great ally in America—most advanced in knowledge, in scientific technique, in the art of government; in which some of her nations at least retain undamaged her old standards of integrity and public duty, while the outer world in other continents, however rebellious against any claim of superiority, however eager sometimes to take advantage of her old masters when they are down, is eagerly trying to master the methods and secrets of Hellenism?

The general process seems to be beyond doubt. Our Enemy Number One equips herself to destroy European civilization with a creed borrowed from a whole series of European writers and with a technology devised by European mechanics and inventors. China, in her effort to become Enemy Number Two, is actually turning away from the ancient Confucian traditions that were once her glory and adopting the new-fangled doctrines of the German Marx and the Russian Stalin. European civilization

has such prestige that the angriest non-Europeans cannot do without it, and the best, while rejecting any *Arché* by the western world, have powerfully embraced its Hellenism. In some cases the blending of the two cultures, Hellenic and non-Hellenic, has resulted in new values which neither could have produced alone. We may recall how the Phoenician Zeno, studying in Athens, was founder of the greatest of Greek schools of philosophy; has any religious teacher of our time impressed the world, both east and west, more than Mahatma Gandhi? In the whole leadership of India today, both intellectual and political, there is a rare blending of the two great cultures; if only one could be sure that it would last! It is a great disappointment that the same has not happened in China.

The old Hellenistic world had, roughly speaking, three great aspirations: it aimed at a hellenizing or humanizing of the brutal world; it longed and strove for *Homonoia*, Concord, between community and community, between man and man; lastly, it proclaimed a conception of the world as One Great City, not of men only but "of men and gods", which should on the one hand supersede all local allegiances and on the other should, like Plato's imagined Republic, be in itself an organization of the righteous life.

The same aspirations are at work in the modern world, and before we call them vain we must reflect on the enormously greater power which, owing to two centuries of unparalleled scientific advance, lies in the hand of modern man and of modern organized society. Our first aspiration, like theirs, is *Homonoia*, Concord; and here, so far, we are defeated. Our two great international organizations, the League of Nations, and the United Nations, though effective beyond expectation in other ways, have certainly not produced world peace. How could they? They were meant to work in a world that was—or at least, taught by experience, wished to be—united, and instead have clashed against two terrible sources of disunion: first the strongest nations in the world drunken with the lust for *Arché*; and many large classes and even peoples in various parts of the globe eager to wreck the social order in order to overthrow their supposed enemies, domestic or national. The prospect is dark and presents our statesmen with the gravest of problems; but we notice that on the whole they preserve their unity, and that none of them has lost hope. Twice already, with the odds against us, we have won the day. It may be that our European Hellas is doomed still further to lose her prestige and her old leadership: it is possible, considering the enormous

forces now massed against her, that she may even lose her freedom. Yet we know that there is waiting across the Atlantic a greater Rome which may at the best establish a true world Peace, and will at the worst maintain in an ocean of barbarism a large and enduring island of true Hellenic life.

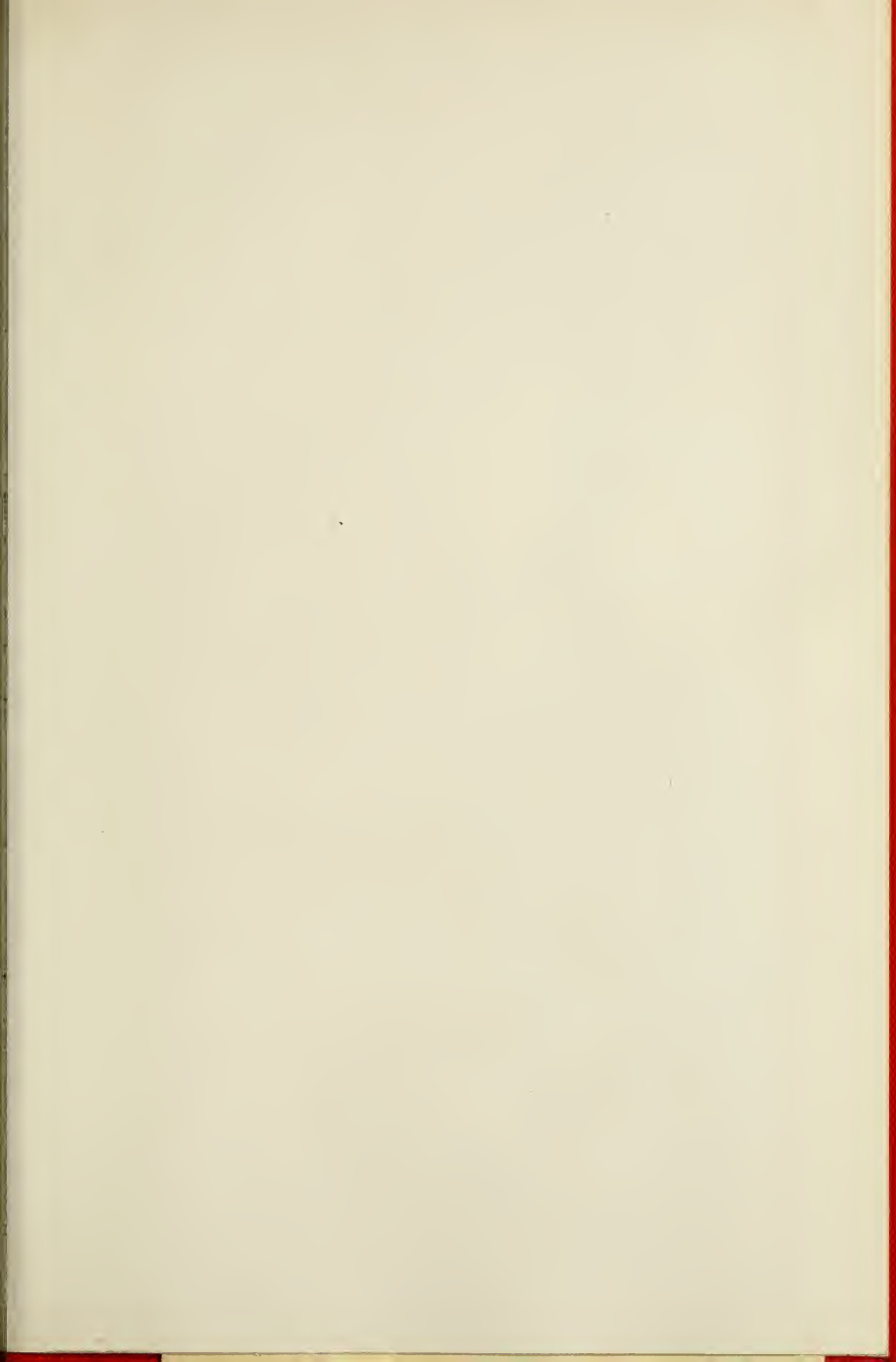
As for the One Great City, to a great degree we have accepted it as our ideal. The principle of allegiance to the good of the world as a whole, in preference to the nationalism by which men think only of their own country, is now generally accepted both in the Charter of UN and in the practice of the more enlightened governments. To be a Nationalist now is to be a confessed sinner.

The last of the three aspirations is the hellenization of a barbarous world. It is here that, if only the great Third War is averted, the next generation may find its most persistent conflict and its best hope. It must use all its strength, all its wisdom, to see that the main drift of the world is Hellenic and not barbarous. It will be difficult, but surely not impossible, to build up a society of nations in which population does not increase to famine point, judges do not expect bribes, prisoners are not tortured, governments are subject to the law, and the law really aims at justice. No doubt, with the spread of

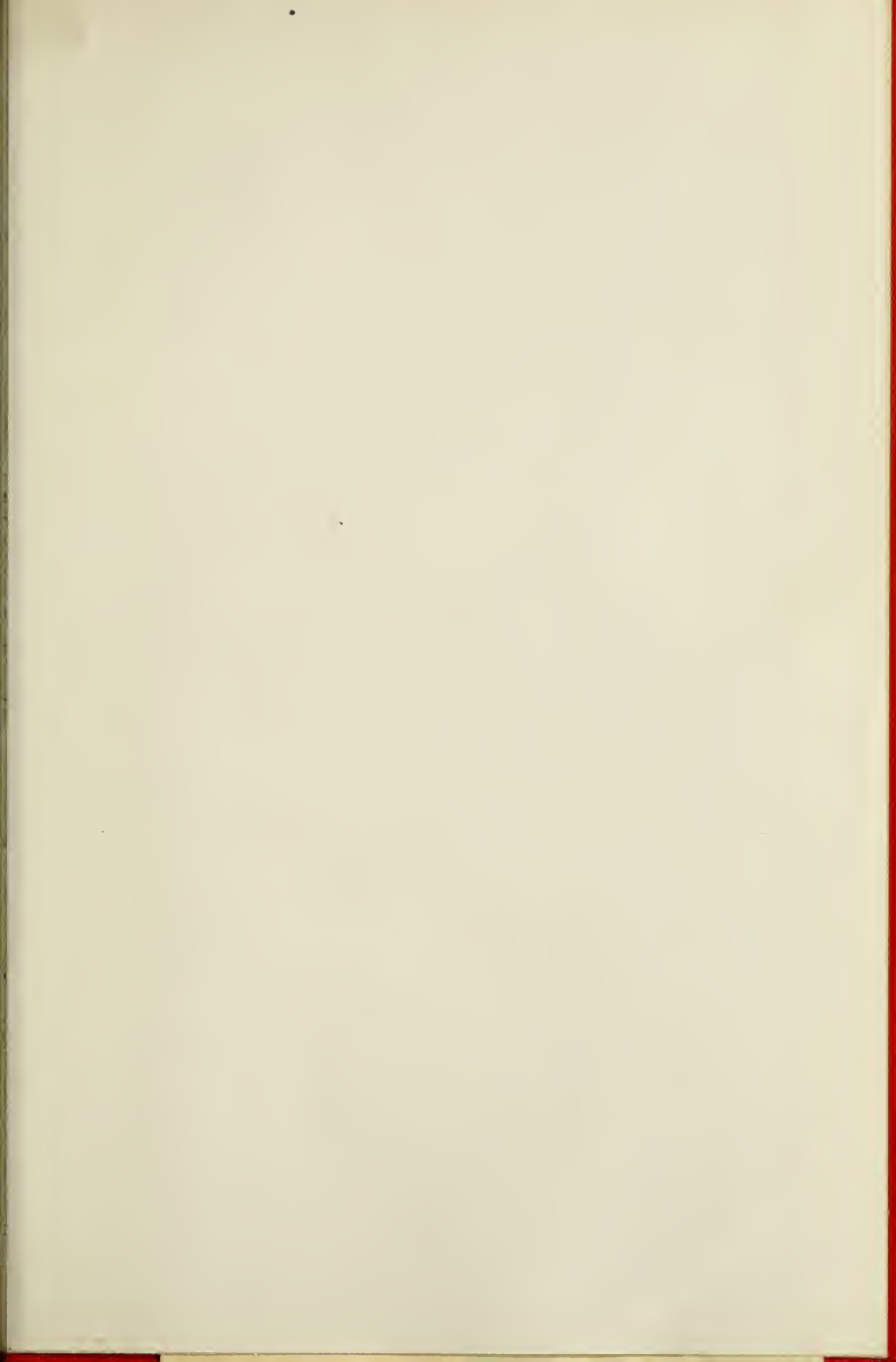
independence among backward peoples, many nations which had reached a fairly decent standard will lose it again. In spite of old catch-words, 'self-government' is not really a satisfactory substitute for 'good government'. Here there will be need for a generous effort of sympathy, and beyond doubt a generous effort is being made: but, whatever happens, mankind must not be re-barbarized. Meantime, we have, I think, in the Hellenic half of the world, achieved something else, and something very great, which the world has never known before. Consider not only the fine work of the better colonial governments in performing their 'sacred trust'. Consider the social and economic work of the UN, the Health service, the Refugee service, the Child service, the wonderful achievements of Technical Aid; in all of which the greatest achievement is not the actual amount of suffering relieved, but the acceptance by all civilized governments, as an ordinary rule of political action, that the strong nations bring help to the weak, the rich to the poor, the advanced to the backward, the safe to those in danger and distress.

Think, in all the recent great disasters, what an eager outpouring of spontaneous help to the sufferers has come from almost all those parts of the world which we call civilized. This active

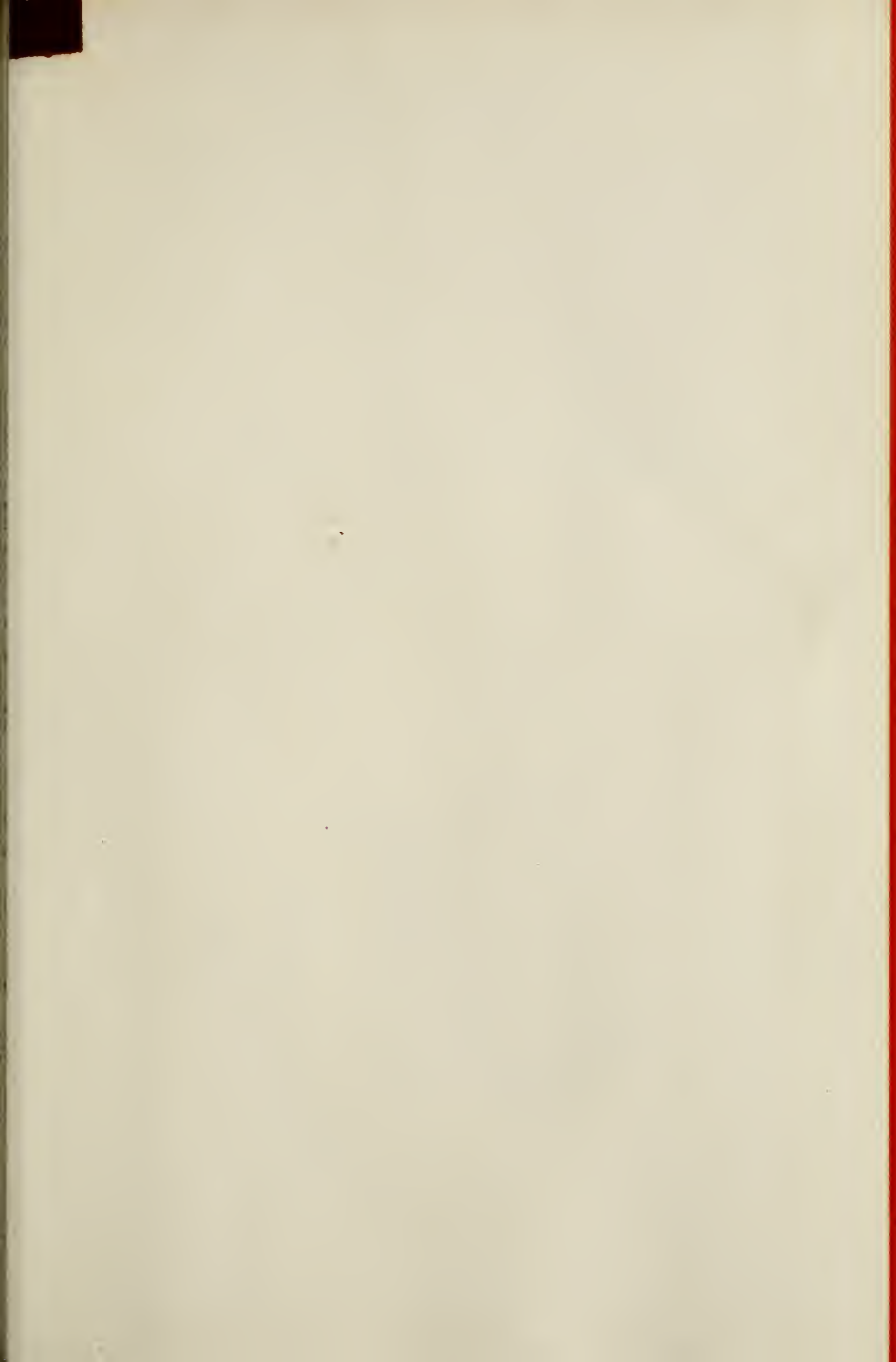
world-wide sympathy is almost a new thing. Nations used normally to be troubled by any increase in a neighbour's wealth and strength: now their normal practice is to help a neighbour's poverty or weakness. The change is due chiefly, no doubt, to our common fear; partly it is the natural result of our increased powers of communication and action. The suffering comes close to us, therefore we feel; we know we have the power to help, therefore we do help. Critics often complain that this is an irreligious age, and in many serious respects the charge is true. Yet there is a religion, almost independent of dogma, which seems to be stealing half-consciously through the minds of men of different faiths and nations when they face together the great sufferings of mankind; a religion which men really believe and on which they act. An old Hellenistic phrase tried to express it: *Deus est mortali mortalem iuvare*: "That man should help his fellow-man is God", or should we say "is man's nearest approach to God"? It is at least in itself "true religion and undefiled". And of that, I think, there is more in the world than ever before.













Hellenism and the modern world main
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